The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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AGITATE! EDUCATE! ORGANIZE!

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ONLY NATURAL PERSONS HAVE "INHERENT RIGHTS"

In defending its company "union" before the United States supreme court, attorneys for the Pennsylvania railroad insisted that "the right to deal with individual representatives of its employes as to rules and working conditions is an inherent right which can not be constitutionally taken from it."

The transportation act (section 301) provides that disputes between management and employes shall be decided, if possible, "in conference between representatives designated and authorized so to confer by the carriers, or the employes or subordinate officials thereof, directly interested in the dispute."

This section plainly states that the workers may designate their representatives. The workers did so, and the company talks of "inherent right" when it refused to recognize these representatives where same are members of organized labor.

The company's plea of "inherent right" illustrates the loose thinking now in vogue whenever industrial disputes are involved.

A corporation is not a natural person.

A corporation that operates a railroad is not free—except when it deals with employes.

Then it is permitted to destroy the workers' morale, threaten disruption of service and increase costs that must be met in the form of higher rates.

And all this because the corporation insists on its "inherent right."

But in all other relations the "inherent right" claim is not heard.

The government (through the interstate commerce commission) tells this railroad how it shall keep its books, what it shall charge for passenger and freight service, whether it may issue bonds to pay for equipment, whether it may extend its lines, whether it may issue additional stock and finally it must return to the federal treasury profits over a certain amount.

The distinction between a quasi-public corporation and a private employer is clear.

The United States supreme court emphasized this distinction when it said (Dayton-Goose Creek railway case):

"By investment in a business dedicated to the public service, the owner must recognize that, as compared with the investment in private business, HE CAN NOT EXPECT EITHER HIGH OR SPECULATIVE DIVIDENDS, BUT THAT HIS OBLIGATION LIMITS HIM TO ONLY FAIR OR REASONABLE PROFIT."

And the railroad corporation is not the judge of what is fair and reasonable.

Why should a railroad corporation talk of its "inherent right" when its employes are involved, when the government, in effect, says:

"We do not regulate private employers, because they are natural persons, but because we create railroad corporations to serve the people, we regulate their bookkeeping, rates, track extensions, stock and bond issues and profits. That's the price they pay for corporate life which the state gives, and without which they can not exist."

When will the government be logical and extend this principle? When will it say to the railroad corporations:

"You have no inherent right to say who shall represent your employes. In the interest of order and public service you must meet the representatives of these employes and must permit them to do their own choosing."

REACTION AND REVOLUTION OPPOSE JOINT BARGAINING

Cambridge, Mass., March 28.—"It is not a disagreement over wages which causes the most bitter industrial conflicts. It is the denial of the workers' right to organize and to bargain collectively, which causes strife, strikes and in some instances industrial warfare," said President Green of the A. F. of L., in an address before Harvard university students.

"Where the right of the workers to organize is conceded and collective bargaining is practiced, the possibilities of strikes are minimized," President Green said. "But where the exercise of this right is denied and the workers are not permitted to act collectively through their chosen representatives, a spirit of revolt manifests itself and the resort to strikes becomes increasingly probable.

"The antagonistic and hostile attitude, so characteristic of the older order in industry, must be supplanted by a friendly relationship and a sense of obligation and responsibility. This is the newer concept of trade unionism. In expounding this philosophy I am conscious of the fact that there are employers of labor (so-called captains of industry) and workers in industry (so-called members of the proletariat) who take sharp issue with the views here expressed and the conclusions reached. That is to be expected. It is both logical and natural.

"While the employers and employes represented in these two groups are as far apart as the poles upon practically all questions peculiar to modern industry, they are united in their opposition to collective bargaining. They do not believe in it and see no virtue in it.

"The employers in this group are opposed to collective bargaining because they believe that ownership in industry is supreme, superseding all other rights, and that this is the only authority recognizable in industry. The discarded rule of master and servant is still a part of their creed. They refuse to recognize the relationship of employer and employe.

"The workers who constitute this other group are opposed to collective bargaining because they assert it means wage slavery. They do not believe in wage contracts or wage-scale regulations. They are dominated by the class war class struggle. They are opposed to the existing social order—to what they term 'capitalism'—and pretend to look forward to the time when capitalism will be destroyed and the rule of the proletariat substituted.

"They believe that any improvement in wages and working conditions which come to the workers through trade unionism and collective bargaining prevents the final triumph of the proletariat and the early realization of their predicted millennium. The enjoyment of high wages and humane conditions of employment by the workers is regarded by this second group as an obstacle in the way of progress, while poverty and suffering are looked upon as stepping stones to success.

"Created by hostile employers and the workers' revolutionary group, trade unionism is pursuing its own policy, fighting for public acceptance of its creed and philosophy.

"The best answer which can be made to those who challenge the workability of collective bargaining is the fact that it has been working successfully in many industries and in many fields of employment.

"It is clear to all who have studied the history of social and economic development that trade unionism is not a discovery or a formula.

"Trade unionism has kept pace with the progress which has been made in industry. It has emerged from its primitive state into a modern institution, giving evidence of power and vitality in a modern way. It is resolutely facing the task of finding a remedy for existing industrial ills. In doing so organized labor is not committed to any dogma or to any inflexible rule. It shapes its policies in accordance with experience and the circumstances which it is called upon to meet.

"The union expresses the workers' unsatisfied desire for self-betterment in all the phases that desire may find expression. No substitute can hope to replace the union, for it has the intrinsic right to its existence which comes from service rendered to fit changing stages of development. Many workers have had dreams of ownership in industry, but even so, we all know that whatever the ownership, private, governmental or employe, the vital problem for us is the terms and relations we have with management. To deal with this problem, labor must always have its voluntary organizations, directed and manned by free men.

"Working men and women are no longer mere fixtures in industry, but, instead, are intelligent, understanding human beings with a concept of life which emphasizes the cultural and spiritual. The attitude of masters of industry must change. We want to make it possible for the workers to acquire and enjoy more of culture, refinement and decency. Through this process they will better understand industry, their work, and thus raise the standard of efficiency and service. These announced purposes and policies possess merit and virtue, and we feel justified in soliciting your sympathetic interest, approval and support."

POWER PLANT ATTACK RESENTED BY NORRIS

Washington, March 28.—Senator Norris, proponent of government operation of hydro-electric power plants, favors the removal of Dr. Charles D. Walcott, superintendent of the Smithsonian institution of this city because he permitted a pamphlet attacking the publicly-owned Ontario hydro-electric plant, written by Dr. S. D. Wyer, to be published with the imprint of the Smithsonian.

Dr. Wyer stated in his pamphlet that the Ontario hydro-electric plant has taken more than $19,000,000 out of the provincial treasury, instead of out of earnings, and by paying losses to this amount it was possible to secure widely-advertised cheap power and light.

Officials of the hydro-electric commission considered the charges so serious that they made a formal denial. They stated that the plant has always paid out of earnings operating expenses, insurance, taxes, maintenance, renewals, reserve and interest. In addition to these items customers are charged an extra amount to enable the capital itself to be eventually retired.

In replying to the Wyer charges, Sir Adam Beck, chairman of the hydro-electric commission, said:

"The large corporate interests, which so bitterly resent the public receiving benefit directly from their natural resources without paying toll to the private interests that have already corralled so much of the public domain, have spared no effort to attack, by various means, the work of the Ontario municipalities in connection with the hydro-electric undertaking."

The Smithsonian institution is maintained by the government. It was established by congress in 1846 "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

Senator Norris declared that the Wyer pamphlet is an insidious form of propaganda against government ownership, and while the author has the right to publish anything he sees fit, the Smithsonian has no proper part in its circulation.

Vicious Contract Labor System Condemned By State Legislators

Charleston, W. Va., March 28.—The viciousness of the convict labor contract system is revealed in a sensational report to the West Virginia legislature by its investigating commission.

It is stated that contractors were secretly awarded convict labor contracts by politicians on the state board of control, and that one of the contractors left the state when served with a subpoena.

The contract system, the commission said, caused the recent strike of convicts at the Moundsville penitentiary.

The commission declared that, "from a moral standpoint, at least, the prisoners are not to blame for the strike which was brought about by the illegal change of task. Those in charge at the time and the contractor employing the labor are responsible."

Despite this defense of helpless convicts, many of them were punished and compelled to submit to the will of promoters of the system, while the strikes were grossly misrepresented by the politicians and newspapers.

The report declares that contracts with the J. C. Bardall company, the Kleeson company and Isador Gordon, who assigned his contract to the Gordon shirt company, are illegal. These contracts were made by the state board of control without advertising, as required by law.

The contract system, according to the report, is antiquated and has been abandoned by practically all progressive states. Many injustices and inhumanity grow out of the system, the commission adds.

The commission recommends the abolition of the contract labor system and the substitution of road work and industries for state use. Other recommendations include reform in punishment, improvement of conditions especially for women prisoners, separation of white and negro prisoners, segregation of those with contagious or infectious diseases, full time prison physician and chaplain, more strict supervision of guards and prison discipline by the warden, revision of powers of judges as to paroles and indeterminate sentences, and a change in the system of granting pardons and paroles which would exclude consideration of the views of the judge and prosecuting attorney in whose court a prisoner was sentenced and give consideration to the recommendation of the warden, the prison physician and chaplain.

The commission further recommends enactment of laws to carry into effect the provisions for the appointment of another commission to continue the investigation.

PEOPLE WERE SERVED BY RECENT CONGRESS

Madison, Wis., March 28.—"The sixty-eighth congress came to its death March 4, to the intense relief and satisfaction of reactionaries all over the country," says Senator La Follette, writing in La Follette's Magazine. The senator declares that "the creditable record of the sixty-eighth congress cannot be erased."

"No congress in American history," he said, "has been more severely criticized, and it is doubtful if any congress has contributed more to the public service.

"If it had not been for the sixty-eighth congress Albert B. Fall would today be enjoying the loot from his shameful bartering of the nation's oil reserves, and Denby and Daugherty would be sitting in the president's cabinet or in honorable retirement. The sixty-eighth congress did more to expose corruption and to call public attention to the evils of government in the interests of private monopoly than any of its predecessors. In the face of obstruction from the president and from administration spokesmen in the senate and the house, it labored to the public view abuses which are undermining representative government and which are to be boldly faced if they are to be removed.

"The sixty-eighth congress submitted the child labor amendment, now rejected by the states in the present floodtide of reaction. It defeated the infamous Mellon plan and repealed the secrecy provision of the income tax laws."

BUSINESS MEN DODGE TEAPOT DOME TRIAL

Cheyenne, Wyo., March 28.—The government's suit in the local federal court to have the Teapot Dome contract annulled has been hampered by the absence of prominent citizens whose testimony would aid the prosecution.

The missing men are Robert W. Stewart, chairman of the board of the Standard oil company of Indiana; James E. O'Neil, former president of the Prairie oil and gas company, Standard oil unit; H. M. Blackmer, former chairman of the board of the Midwest Refining company, and H. S. Osler of Toronto, who, as president of the now defunct Continental trading company, is alleged to have withdrawn from the New York branch of the Dominion bank $233,500 in Liberty bonds. These bonds, the government claims, went to former Secretary of the Interior Fall for his son-in-law, Wilton T. Everhart.

The government's efforts to trace the four men have been fruitless. It is claimed they are in foreign countries.

"WE-DID-IT" BOYS LOOKING FOR CREDIT

Washington, March 28.—After the organized postal employes won their fight for a $300 annual wage increase, the "We did it" boys appeared on the scene. Prominent in the list is a noisy company "union" of postal clerks which is petted by the postoffice bureaucracy, and is used as a foil to the legitimate postal clerks' union.

The insincerity of this group is indicated by the testimony of their secretary, Grogan, before a subcommittee of the committee on post offices and post roads, sixty-eighth congress (pages 431-432):

"You know as well as I do that the government is under no obligations to say that you have got to provide a living wage just because a man needs it. If you were to go to the bank and ask for $100 and tell them that your family was starving and you have to get it, will they give it to you? Why be hypocritical in this matter? Let us face facts and be frank. To base our plea simply on the ground that we need more money is asking charity, and we want none of that."

LABOR SURPLUS IN WEST

Seattle, March 28.—West coast cities are turning workers to stay away from this section because of unemployment. Local bodies in many cities have issued statements on the labor surplus in their respective communities. The labor exodus is especially true in the lumber industrial centers of Washington and includes Seattle, Tacoma, Bellingham, Everett, Grays Harbor, Olympia, Kelso and smaller cities and towns of the mid-state section.

WANT LONG HOURS CONTINUED

Nashville, Tenn., March 28.—A bill to limit the hours of working women to 50 per week is opposed by manufacturers.

WORKERS JUST TALK IN COMPANY "UNION"

Washington, March 28.—"It is really too bad that hot air and fine declarations always prove such poor substitutes for good wages and working conditions," says the Journal of Electrical Workers and Operators.

"And it is too bad," continues this labor magazine, "that one millionaire concern finds hypocritical talk among that it must expose one of the pet schemes of other millionaire concerns. But this unexpected has happened just the same.

"The Russell Sage foundation, established by the fund of a millionaire, says that the company 'union' is a cheat and a fraud. Of course, this is old stuff, but it deserves some notice, anyway. The company 'union,' the report says, 'does not develop leadership or stimulate interest among wage earners. They do not feel free to act in opposition to the company's interest. Why should they? Why should they be ingrates? Doesn't the company 'union' belong to the company? Didn't the company pay for it? Didn't the company organize it? Didn't the company write the bylaws? Then why should the company be cheated?

"Only a blind fool thinks these workers have a share in making final decisions on grievances. Just ask some of the Bell telephone employes or some of the railroad workers, or ask some of the textile workers who only recently were given such a good dose of company 'union' that they voted to reduce wages 10 per cent and hold no further meetings unless called by the company."

ACCIDENTS INCREASE

Seattle, March 28.—The state department of labor and industries has reduced its factory inspection and accidents have increased. The number of fatal accidents continue to average one per day, but there is an increase of nonfatal accidents of 25 per cent in the months of February over the same month in 1924. The increase for the first two months in 1925 was 10 per cent over the first two months in 1924.

This increase is significant, because the number of workers is 50,000 more than try in the state, has slowed down to five days, and in some instances four days a week.

NON-UNIONISTS "RESIGN"

Jackson, Mich., March 28.—The Michigan electric railway, operating in Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Lansing and this city, failed to break a union shop contract with the Amalgamated Association of Street Car Men.

The officials insisted that the employment of non-unionists was a violation of the contract. The company refused to wait until nearly the time set for a strike, and then accepted the non-unionists' "resignation."

STEEL TRUST WORKERS NOT PAID LIVING WAGE

New York, March 28.—The steel trust does not pay a living wage to every eighth employe, and to its annual report, which has been printed in pamphlet form.

The wage last year averaged $1,794, or less than $6 below the 1923 average. This average includes foremen and highly skilled workers, the public must understand that wage is paid to the so-called unskilled.

During this same period food costs alone increased 3 per cent, according to the United States bureau of labor statistics.

During 1923 the steel trust paid $1,683,921 in pensions to retiring employes. This is approximately an average of $200, or less than $4 a week.

COSSACKS UNDER FIRE; ARE ILLEGALLY PAID

Charleston, W. Va., March 28.—Law-defying coal operators of this state were shocked when the legality of appropriations to their pet cossacks was challenged on the floor of the West Virginia legislature.

Delegate Street of Barbour county touched off the fireworks when he introduced a joint resolution in the house of delegates that the attorney general be instructed to bring suit before the state supreme court to stop payment of warrants that may be issued by the state auditor for the cossacks.

The resolution has created a sensation among state officials and their political allies who fear a court test, and who depend on cossacks to maintain their corrupted policy. It is declared that the present system of passing appropriations is illegal, and the resolution will assist the people to discuss the entire state police system.

WOULD OUTLAW STRIKES

Augusta, Maine, March 28.—Bills introduced by the workmen's compensation boards in the state legislature would outlaw every effort of the workers to improve conditions.

Senator Crafts proposes that a worker be jailed for not more than six months and fined not more than $200 if he attempts "by force" to compel an employer to "alter his mode of carrying on his business," to limit or increase the number of his employes, or the rate of wages or time of service."

"SHINERS NOMINATE

Cincinnati, March 28.—Officers of the Metal Polishers' International union have been nominated, and a large number of contestants are listed for the various offices, except international president and vice president. Britton and Atherton, holding those respective positions, have no opposition.

HOW CAN FREE WORKERS MEET THIS COMPETITION?

Nashville, Tenn., March 28.—The effect of convict labor competition with free labor was illustrated in this city when a local department store advertised Happy Home house dresses at 99 cents each.

These garments are made by the Sterling manufacturing company in the Tennessee state prison. The company pays the state 60 cents per day for producing these dresses. The factory and power are furnished the company without cost by the state.

PASS COMPENSATION BILL

Denver, Colo., March 28.—The state house of representatives has approved an amendatory workmen's compensation bill which increases weekly payments from $12 to $15. The total compensation for accidents resulting in the death of a worker has been increased from $3,750 to $4,500.

WANT HIGHER COMPENSATION

Lansing, Mich., March 28.—Trade unionists in this state are supporting legislation that would increase compensation for fatalities and accidents in industry. Stricter state supervision over private liability companies is also urged.

Editor Supports Constabulary Bill; Doesn't Understand Sinister Plot

Aurora, Ill., March 28.—The editor of the Aurora Beacon-News kicked over a bee hive when he charged that the constabulary bill providing a sack legislation because this new military force may be used in strikes.

In an open letter, P. J. Hickey, secretary of Lathers' union No. 121, informs the editor that he "has failed to get accurate knowledge regarding the bill."

"We have opposed the state constabulary bill as citizens rather than as industrial workers," the trade unionist said.

"Americans, familiar with the institutions of our country and their significance, we oppose the centralized police authority which this bill centralization, as in the case of the proposed bill, will remove control out of the hands of the people and place in the police are to exercise authority.

"You neglect to tell your readers that the bill which you are supporting proposes the appointment of a military force under the autocratic command of a so-called superintendent who is to be appointed for life, subject to removal only for constitutional causes and who is to have absolute power to hire, promote, demote or dismiss any member of the 'enlisted force' as may suit his pleasure.

"Organized labor is not opposed to police protection either in the cities, urban sections of the state, or in the rural sections. They operate from an office in La Salle street, Chicago.

"Two years ago organized labor assisted in promoting the passage of a rural highway patrol bill. Organized labor advocates furiously fought that bill.

"We shall continue our opposition to the creation of an autocratic military force in Illinois beyond the control of the citizenship.

"In conclusion, let me say we resent the implication contained in your editorial that because we are working men we have no other interest than that of wages and hours. We are American citizens, with all that the term implies, and we are conscious of our duties as such."

NON-UNION BOSSES COURTING DISASTER

New York, March 28.—The fourteenth anniversary of the Triangle fire, with the death of 146 young working girls, was the occasion for a warning by officers of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' union that similar tragedies will occur if present-day tendencies are not checked.

The big drive in this industry are being split into small scattered units. With the appearance of the jobber, the cloak shop has been converted into the old-time sweatshop, and the dress shop in this industry exhibits the same tendencies. These shops are operated under non-union conditions, and another Triangle disaster is not at all improbable, the unionists declare.

"It is high time, upon this anniversary of the tragic death of our fellow workers, that we give this most important matter careful thought," says Justice, official magazine of the garment workers. "We must not let things drift from bad to worse. We must make every effort to weed out from the industry every irresponsible shop, every 'corporation' outfit which evades control by the union and its right to heed the gruesome warning of the Triangle fire and its martyred dead."

The labor magazine declares these sweatshops must be replaced by clean, healthy, big shops "where the well-being of our workers as a whole may be looked after and the menace of fire disasters removed."

OPPOSE CONVICT LABOR

Kansas City, Mo., March 28.—Officers of the state federation of labor are urging all union sympathizers to assist in the fight to abolish prison contract labor in this state.

The unionists insist that prisoners should work at productive labor for the use of the state and its political subdivisions, rather than compete with free labor.

Prison administration officials have expressed a willingness to co-operate with organized labor and Missouri manufacturers are in sympathy with this movement.

PRINTERS GET CONTRACT

Tacoma, Wash., March 28.—The Typographical union and newspaper publishers have adjusted their long dispute over the wage scale and a new contract has been signed.

INDUSTRY IS DEADLY; ACCIDENTS INCREASE

Washington, March 28.—The startling increase in industrial accidents in the United States is revealed in the Illinois statistics for the years from 1918 to 1923, published in the Monthly Labor Review of the bureau of labor statistics.

In 1918 when factories were working under the stress of war needs, there were 38,247 accidents in Illinois. The number of accidents rose to 50,585 in 1920, fell off to 47,672 in 1921 due to business depression, increased to 46,772 in 1922, and in 1923 jumped to 61,810, an increase of 15,040 in one year. Fatal accidents have increased proportionately, the average for the five years ending with 1923 being 509, while in 1923, 675 persons were killed.

Although it is impossible to compute the economic cost of these accidents, the payments to Illinois workmen on account of accidents totaled $48,000,000 in the six years. Accepting estimates of the committee on elimination of waste in industry that compensation payments amount to only 22 per cent of the total actual and prospective wage loss of those injured, the Monthly Labor Review says: "It appears that the direct loss in this one state alone amounted to $218,000,000."

To meet this difficulty for better methods of prevention it is proposed to develop a technical division in the department of factory inspection to collect research and statistical analysis, to show not only the industries in which have a high accident rate, but the individual plants.

UNIONISM DEFENDED

Terre Haute, Ind., March 28.—The local chamber of commerce has referred organized labor by its declaration for the anti-union shop. At a mass meeting of workmen unionism affirmed that the business men's position is a challenge to the trade union movement.

Speakers urged that union dollars be spent with non-members of the chamber and that candidates for office be questioned as to their affiliation with the hostile organization. Another mass meeting will be called in the near future, when stronger trade union sentiment will be developed.

PASS COMPENSATION ACT

Phoenix, Ariz., March 28.—The state legislature has passed the Jones-Provost workmen's compensation act. It includes an amendment to the constitution that provides that an employe shall decide before the injury whether he will come under the compensation law or the employers' liability law.

The act will be submitted to a special election next September together with other constitutional amendments to the constitution.

SERFDOM COMPLETE IN SOUTHERN MINES

Chattanooga, Tenn., March 28.—Working conditions in non-union mines in this state is the best argument why workers should organize. Excepting West Virginia, it is doubtful if any section of the country can present such an appalling situation as exists in mining properties operated by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis and the Tennessee Central railroads.

With a wage as low as any in the United States, iniquitous stores, "yellow dog" contracts, unlimited power to tax workers for powder and tools sharpening, and workers denied the right to watch weighing of coal, serfdom is complete.

No worker is employed in these mines who refuses to agree not to join a trade union. The state law provides for a check weighman at each coal tipple, but the miners must accept the word of a company agent as to the amount of coal mined.

The miners can not move their families to other localities, as practically every one of them is in debt through the operation of pluck-me stores.

IS SYSTEM LACKING IN U. S. TREASURY?

Washington, March 28.—Those worthy citizens who are on the lecture circuit with "efficiency" could devote some time to the United States treasury, according to a statement by Senator Couzens.

The Michigan lawmaker is chairman of a senate special committee that is probing internal revenue affairs. In explaining the lack of co-ordination in this department, Mr. Couzens cited the valuation of two part owners of an oil well.

The valuation of one man was fixed at $200,000. He owned one-third of the oil well. The other man owned one-fourth of the well and his valuation is $600,000.

The valuations were made by different agents of the treasury department.

The difference represented an overtax of about $200,000 to one man, an undertax of about the same amount to the other man, whichever was the correct ruling.

FOOD COSTS DROP

Washington, March 28.—Retail cost of food during February dropped 2 per cent, as compared with January, reports the United States bureau of labor statistics.

For the year period February 15, 1924, to February 15, 1925, the increase was approximately 3 per cent.

For the 12-year period, February 15, 1913, to February 15, 1925, the increase was about 54 per cent.